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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [CH](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MAY 16 TAO PRESS BRIEFING: FRANK HSIEH CANDIDACY;
NEW PM CHANG; CROSS-STRAIT TOURISM; OLYMPIC TORCH ROUTE;
DIRECT LINKS

Summary

11. Key points at the May 16 Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) press briefing were:

-- TAO Spokesman Li deflected questions on DPP Presidential Candidate front-runner Frank Hsieh and the newly appointed Premier Chang Chun-hsiung.

-- The fifth round of "technical consultations" on cross-strait tourism have stalled and Li did not respond to a reporter's suggestion that the Mainland's addressing Taiwan as "Taiwan, China" in consultation documents was the obstacle.

-- Claims that Beijing is bullying Taiwan in regards to the Olympic torch issue are groundless, said Li.
End summary.

No Comment on DPP Hsieh or New Premier

12. Asked at the May 16 Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) press briefing about the DPP front-runner for the 2008 "Presidential" election, Frank Hsieh, TAO spokesman Li Wei-yi deflected saying that "scholars have their own opinions on the matter." In response to a reporter's question of what the effect the new Premier Chang Chun-hsiung, who recently replaced Su Tseng-chang, would have on cross-strait relations and issues such as tourism and the Olympic torch route, the spokesman simply commented on the current situation in these areas without mention of the new appointment. On whether Chang's new position would affect the ability of the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) to carry on work related to particular issues, such as mutual recognition of university degrees, Li said that the ability of the SEF to play a role in cross-strait ties remains predicated on the important political foundation of the "1992 consensus."

Cross-Strait Tourism: "Taiwan, China" an Obstacle?

13. After achieving consensus and partial results through four rounds of technical consultations on the issue of opening up cross-strait tourism to Mainland residents, Li said the Taiwan side has not responded to Mainland proposals prepared for the fifth round of consultations. Li declined to comment on a reporter's suggestion that progress was hindered by the Mainland's insistence on referring to Taiwan as "Taiwan, China" in consultation documents.

Olympic Torch

14. On the issue of the Olympic torch route, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2008 Olympic Games (BOCOG) made it very clear at an April 26 press briefing that Beijing carried out fair consultations, respected the views the Taiwan side and reached four important points of consensus which were confirmed by Taiwan's Tsai Chen-wai on March 27, said Li. He added that claims that the Mainland is bullying Taiwan on the Olympic torch issue were groundless.

Taiwan Politics Hinders Direct Links

15. Chen Shui-bian's claim that direct transportation links cannot be realized by 2008 because of Mainland insincerity shows his own lack of sincerity in promoting these links and suggests Chen might take new action to impede progress in the matter, said Li when asked for comment. The success of charter flights demonstrates there are no business-related or technical issues to direct links and the Mainland's sincerity has been shown by its consistent, active promotion of links including new policies and measures announced at the Third Cross-Straits Economic and Cultural Forum in April 2007. Li agreed with a comment by Penghu Cross-Straits Exchanges Federation Chairman Li that the first direct cargo transport between Fujian and Penghu on May 15 was a small step in cross-Straits links, but very important for Penghu.

Kidnapped Taiwan Businessman Released

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16. Lin Wen-tung, a Taiwan resident kidnapped in Guangzhou on May 5 was rescued two days later by local police, Li said when questioned about the case and the possibility that suspects will be extradited back to Taiwan. The spokesman stated that further matters related to the case would be handled in accordance with relevant laws. Five suspects are in custody and police are looking for Hsu Chia-min, a Taiwan resident allegedly behind the kidnapping, added Li.

Mainland Ready for Consultation and Student Exchange

17. China hopes to consult with Taiwan authorities on cross-Straits exchanges, said Li responding to recent comments coming from the Taiwan "Mainland Affairs Council" that the Mainland should not avoid interaction with Taiwan. These remarks evidence Taiwan's refusal to implement measures that are in its own interests, he added. Many common proposals to expand cooperation and promote the peaceful, stable development of relations were approved at the Third Cross-Straits Economic and Cultural Forum. Asked about a Mainland proposal at the Forum to allow Mainland students to study in Taiwan, Li said the implementation may be difficult because Taiwan has given no response and still does not recognize Mainland university degrees.

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